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MEDITATION

Standing Before God

And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

I Kings 17:1

Amazing appearance!

Elijah the Tishbite . . . said unto Ahab. . . .

Perhaps, you are inclined to criticize the writer of this history? You remark that here he introduces a character to his readers, and speaks of him as if all his readers should be thoroughly acquainted with him, while fact is that in his entire narrative he never even mentioned him before? . . .

Perfectly true: like a brilliant and wholly unexpected flash of lightning in a pitch black night Elijah appears here on the stage of the history of God's kingdom. And, too, you are expected to know him, to recognize him at once: And Elijah the Tishbite said unto Ahab! . . .

Yet, you never heard of him before. This is positively the first time you meet him. You do not know whence he is, for even the cognomen "Tishbite" does not supply you with any certain information about this man. And you would like to inquire, perhaps, into his past. Where did this man come from? Was he a Gileadite? Even this does not seem sure at all, for the statement that he was of the inhabitants of Gilead may denote nothing more than that he dwelled in that wild country for some time, was a stranger, an immigrant in that Trans-Jordanic region. Who are his parents? Where was he born? Did he have an education? Does he bring credentials that authorize him to intrude into the palace of the king, and to

deliver the dreadful message which he brings? . . .

But all your inquiries are vain!

Elijah appears without introduction, he presents himself to the king of Israel for just a brief moment, delivers his brief message in staccato notes and disappears!

One flash, one mighty clap of thunder, then all is once more profoundly, distressingly, oppressively still.

You are disappointed, and continue to inquire?

Beware, lest your inquiries lead you in the wrong direction, and your curiosity become the cause of your failure to hear the Word of God that comes to you through this amazing appearance! Beware lest your investigation result in your collecting so many facts about the man Elijah that because of these you are incapable of seeing the Elijah of the Scriptures!

Do you not remember that the Jews of Jesus' time, the scribes and Pharisees, knew all about Him, and occasionally made use of that knowledge to soothe their own conscience, and quiet the fears of their unbelieving hearts, and to find an excuse and justification for their rejection of Him and their opposition to Him? "And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" John 6:42. And they made the reasonable deduction that He could not possibly be the "bread of life that came down from heaven". And so did his own countrymen know Him: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters are they not all with us," And they concluded that His words of wisdom could not possibly be true and genuine, and certainly could not be accepted . . .

And they were offended in Him! Matt. 13: 56-56.

Beware, lest in Elijah, too, you be offended!

Men like him need no introduction. You need not know the details of their natural life. Fact is, they are better omitted, in order that he may boldly stand forth as the Elijah of revelation, the man that standeth before God.

And Elijah the Tishbite said. . . .

Hear him!

Elijah: my God is Jehovah!

Elijah: the prophet that standeth before God!

Elijah: the ambassador, who before the wicked king of Israel swears by the living God, and announces that He is Israel's God!

Mighty figure is he, not, indeed, if you inquire about his origin and character and the facts of his life, for then you will discover a man of like passions as yourself: but when you contemplate him as he here appears, without introduction: a representative of the Most High, declaring war to the end upon the powers of darkness!

For such is Elijah: a light in darkness. And his voice is like the angry roar of the lion, like deep, mighty thunder. . . .

Because he speaks for God in times of apostacy and great wickedness.

Dark, indeed, it was in the land that was Elijah's field of labor. He labored among an apostate people. For the ten tribes, we recall, had revolted from Judah, and from the house of David, after the death of Solomon; and they had established a separate kingdom under Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin. And whatever may have been the occasion of this revolution, and whatever one may judge of the reason they offered for their insurrection, certain it is, that their breaking away from the house of David was a schismatic act, disapproved by Jehovah. For in the loins of Judah was "the Lion of Judah's tribe", and with the house of David God established His everlasting covenant; and to break away from them was to separate themselves from God's covenant. And though outwardly the kingdom of the ten tribes was more prosperous often than that of Judah, and though numerically they were the more powerful, yet they represented the schismatic church.

And soon they began to reap the fruit of their apostacy.

They became separated, too, through the sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin, from temple and altar and priesthood, and worshipped the golden calves their wicked king had made for them. And from that time there was a continual and rapid descent into the pit of corruption and destruction. In his wrath God gave them wicked kings to rule over them. All walked in the sins of Jeroboam. And the people followed their kings in the way of apostacy and iniquity.

And just now, at the time of the first appearance of Elijah, the man of God, the darkness was thickest!

About sixty years of history the kingdom of Israel had passed through, a history of increasing wickedness. Six kings had reigned over them, all walking in the sins of Jeroboam. But the sixth had been worse than all his predecessors, for 'Omri wrought evil in

the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him." I Kings 16:25. And now Ahab reigned, the seventh from the beginning of the kingdom. And again we read of him: "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him". I Kings 16:30. He even surpassed his wicked father in iniquity. To Jezebel, the wicked heathen princess, he had joined himself in wedlock. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon, who had killed his brother and usurped the throne. It was through Jezebel that the worship of Baal was introduced into the kingdom of Israel. Baal was the chief god of the Phoenicians, the Canaanites, and all the Western Asiatics, related, perhaps, to Bel of the Babylonians. His name means Lord and he was worshipped as the cause and sustainer of all physical life, and of all the reproductive and generative powers in nature. To him Ahab, at the instigation of his wicked wife, who was a much stronger character than the king, built a temple and made an altar in Samaria. Baal was worshipped by the royal family, and the people soon found it expedient to follow suit. A swarm of priests and prophets of Baal were introduced into the land, and occupied places of honor and importance.

And the prophets of Jehovah were persecuted and killed!

The apostacy was complete!

O, to be sure, there were even then still seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, but they were hid, and did not dare to show themselves openly.

The antichristian powers of darkness prevailed!

The powers of evil were dominant among Israel. They occupied all the positions of power and influence: on the throne, in the schools, in the places of worship. And the cause of God's covenant appeared completely lost!

And in that darkness, suddenly, unexpectedly, no one knows whence, appeared Elijah!

He stands before God!

His name is Elijah: my God is Jehovah!

He swears by the living God, the God of Israel!

He invades the very camp of the enemy, and there declares war!

Mighty man of God!

Standing before God!

That phrase expresses the characteristic position of Elijah.

Therein, in that position, lies his great significance as a man of God.

And it, too, explains to us the secret of his power.

It is expressed in his name. He is Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead. This probably means that he was born in Tishbe, but that

he had migrated to trans-Jordanic Gilead, and dwelled there as a stranger in a strange land. But his name, Elijah, is significant, for it means: My God is Jehovah! There was a clear confession in that name. There was a confession in that name which was a loud protest. It meant: My God is Jehovah over against Baal and all his forces of darkness! The name pictures this man of God as standing before God in opposition to the wickedness of his day!

It is evident from his oath.

He swears by Jehovah, the God of Israel, the living God! And in every word of this oath he emphatically announces that he stands before God. For to swear by Jehovah indicates to stand in His presence, to speak before His face and to call upon Him as a witness of the truth of one's words. And the announcement is both emphatic and antithetical. A strong confession, and a powerful protest and condemnation of the powers of darkness there are in this oath. Elijah's God is Jehovah, the I AM: Baal is not. Jehovah is the God of Israel, a relation that has its source and eternal ground in God's free and sovereign election: Baal can never be Israel's God, despite the efforts of a wicked king and a cruel queen to enthrone him as lord over God's heritage. And this Jehovah, who is the God of Israel, is the living God! He acts, He sees and hears, He knows and speaks, He is mighty in all His works. Baal is dead!

Thus the man of God swears confesses, protests, condemns. . . .

And he openly declares his own position: before whom I stand!

And that is always the position of the Church in the world: she stands before God!

And that is always the calling of the Church in the world; she openly declares: I stand before the living God!

Even to the end of this world, even in that dark period of oppression that is still to come over the whole world, the "two witnesses" are the "two olive trees" and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." Rev. 11:4.

For to stand before God is the position of the servant-friend, of him that stands in covenant-relation to the only Potentate of potentates, the Lord of the whole earth, Jehovah is His name, the living God. It means to be conscious of standing before His face, of being the object of His grace, of tasting His goodness. It means to receive all power and authority to speak and to act, to fight and to suffer, from Him alone. It signifies to act and to speak in His name and in His behalf. . . .

That is the significance of Elijah.

And that is the secret of his power!

For apparently precarious and impossible is his position and stand. Baal is represented by thousands

upon thousands; he has power over the sword; the mighty and the noble are on his side. . . .

And Elijah is a lonely figure!

But he stands before Jehovah!

His will be the victory!

And Elijah said. . . .

But what did he say to the wicked king?

Was he, perhaps, the court-preacher, that must always be careful to please the king and speak flattering words?

He declared war!

Nay more: he even now announced that Jehovah, before Whom he was standing, and Who is the living God, would reveal His power, and would bring to nought the power of darkness as represented by Baal: "there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word!"

The question,—which is not a question at all, but is vainly raised as such by the powers of iniquity,—was, as always: who is GOD? Ahab and Jezebel, and all apostatizing Israel answered: Baal is God! Or, at least, they declared that Baal also was God. It was Baal that was the cause of all the generative and reproductive powers in nature; Baal that gave rain and fertility, crops and prosperity, according to his worshippers, or rather, according to the wicked pretention of his adorers. The heavens and the earth, therefore, must bear witness, that Jehovah is God, and He alone is Lord of all!

It shall not rain!

Neither shall there be dew!

And lest the shut heavens and the cracked earth be interpreted as a "natural phenomenon", or lest, perhaps, the drought be attributed to the displeasure and wrath of Baal, the judgment of God is connected with the servant of Jehovah, with the word of him that standeth before God. He must bring the announcement of Jehovah's judgment to the king; and he shall have the power to shut and to open again the heavens: *according to my word!*

For this the man of God had prayed: the prayer of the righteous!

Even in the wilds of Gilead he had been standing before God. And his soul had been sorely grieved at the sight of Israel's apostacy and of the reign of the wicked in the land of the covenant. And he had prayed that it might not rain. . . .

Even as often the church, standing before the God of the earth, prays for His coming in the way of judgments!

And the prayer is heard. It was heard then; it is always heard. . . .

Until the coming of Him that always stands before God!

Come, Lord Jesus!

H. H.

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EDITOR — Rev. H. Hoeksema

Contributing editors—Revs. J. Blankespoor, A. Cammenga, P. De Boer, J. D. de Jong, H. De Wolf, L. Doezeema, M. Gritters, C. Hanko, B. Kok, G. Lubbers, G. M. Ophoff, A. Petter, M. Schipper, J. Vanden Breggen, H. Veldman, R. Veldman, W. Verhil, L. Vermeer, P. Vis, G. Vos, and Mr. S. De Vries.

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to REV. H. HOEKSEMA, 1139 Franklin St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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EDITORIALS

De Oorlog En Zondags Arbeid

Toen we eenigen tijd geleden onze gedachten uitspraken over bovenstaande kwestie, en als ons oordeel gaven, dat de Christen wel op Zondag mag werken tot het vervaardigen van oorlogsmateriaal, wanneer de overheid dit van hem eischt, hielden we ons met opzet strikt bij het punt, waarom het toen ging. Het ging toen niet in het algemeen over werken op Zondag; ook zelfs niet over de vraag, of een Christen wel of Zondag mag werken tot het fabriceren van oorlogsmateriaal; maar eenvoudig over de bepaalde kwestie, of een Christen zich aan de overheid moet onderwerpen, wanneer deze van hem eischt, dat hij ook op den sabbat zal werken in "defense-work". En wij meenden, en zijn nog overtuigd, dat het antwoord op deze bepaalde vraag bevestigend moet zijn. Dat mocht het antwoord niet zijn, indien werken op Zondag *per se* verkeerd ware. Dan immers zou ons antwoord moeten zijn: we moeten Gode meer gehoorzaam zijn dan de menschen. Doch waar dit niet het geval is, en noodzakelijke werken, zoowel als werken van barmhartigheid ook op Zondag mogen en moeten worden verricht, daar meenden we, dat we ons in dit geval aan de overheid moeten onderwerpen, en dat we de beslissing, of het vervaardigen van oorlogsmateriaal ook op Zondag noodzakelijk is, aan de verantwoordelijkheid der overheid moeten overlaten.

We gevoelden destijds wel, dat hier allerlei gevaren om den hoek gluurden, en dat de kwestie wel zoo eenvoudig niet zou blijven, als wij haar behandelden. Dat er misbruik zou worden gemaakt van dit toestemmen van den Christen om op gezag der overheid op Zondag te werken, lag wel voor de hand. Immers ligt de controle over deze dingen meestal bij de wereld. En wat geeft de wereld nu om den Zondag? Ze mag inzien, dat het rusten op den zevenden dag, op één dag in de zeven, een fundamenteele ordinantie Gods is, daar ze immers in de schepping gegrond is; en dus niet dan met schade voor den mensch kan worden overtreden. En de ervaring heeft ook haar wel geleerd, dat het niet profijtelijk is voor den werkgever, wanneer hij zijn arbeiders zeven dagen in de week laat werken. Maar voor de geestelijke beteekenis en waarde van den sabbat heeft de wereld geen oog. Dat een Christen werkman werkelijk behoefte heeft aan den rustdag, en dat hij op dien dag zich bijzonderlijk wil bezig houden met en vermeien in de dingen van Gods koninkrijk, daarvan verstaat de wereld niets. En daarom geeft de wereld dus ook niet. Het lag dus voor de hand om te vreezen, dat die wereld misbruik

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zou maken van de omstandigheden, en de oorlog als en excuus zou gebruiken om de Christen en de kerk van den sabbat te berooven. Aan den anderen kant liet het zich ook voorstellen, dat er min geestelijke Christenen zouden worden gevonden, die, wanneer het eenmaal toegegeven was, dat men op Zondag wel mocht werken tot het vervaardigen van oorlogsmateriaal, wanneer de overheid dit van ons eischt, om des dollars wil zooveel mogelijk zulke baantjes zouden zoeken, waarin ze op Zondag moeten werken, en bovendien ook zich zouden laten vinden voor Zondagsarbeid, wanneer niet de overheid, maar eenvoudig de werkgever dit van hen zou vragen voor eigen profijt. Het is natuurlijk altijd "veiliger", om den Christen in de wereld te binden aan een uitwendige wet, dan om de dingen over te laten aan zijne christelijke vrijheid.

Wat we destijds wel zagen en vreesden, wordt thans echter meer en meer werkelijkheid; en daarom gevoelen we ons gedrongen om nog eens over dit onderwerp te schrijven en een waarschwend woord te richten tot al ons volk. In de eerste plaats is het duidelijk, dat in vele fabrieken Zondagswerk geëischt wordt door den werkgever, niet omdat de overheid dit eischt, maar omdat het profijtelijk is voor den werkgever. En ten tweeden wordt er ook heel wat op Zondag gewerkt, waar het zeer duidelijk is, dat het uit oorzaak van den oorlog niet noodzakelijk is. Immers werkt men op vele plaatsen wel op Zondag, maar toch geen zeven dagen in de week. Integendeel, de werklieden krijgen om de zes dagen, of soms zelfs om de vijf dagen, een dag af, bij groepen, ieder op hun beurt. Zulk doen toont duidelijk, dat het niet gaat om vervaardigen van noodzakelijk oorlogsmateriaal, maar eenvoudig om de fabriek te laten doorloopen, en dus om het profijt van den werkgever. Nu is het gemakkelijk in te zien, dat zulk Zondagswerk zeker niet valt onder de rubriek "noodzakelijk werk op gezag der overheid". En het is ook duidelijk, dat wij dit nimmer hebben verdedigd. Het is dan ook mijn overtuiging, dat onze menschen zich niet mogen laten vinden voor dit wereldsche gedoe, maar standvastig behooren te weigeren, om in zulke omstandigheden op Zondag te werken. Zegt de overheid, dat de nood der tijden vordert, dat we zeven dagen in de week zullen werken, goed. We zullen noode den sabbat er aan geven, maar we zullen om Gods wil gehoorzamen. Maar gaat het er eenvoudig om, om den eersten dag der week in te ruilen voor een anderen dag, zoodat we wel slechts zes of vijf dagen in de week werken, maar toch geen sabbat overhouden, en niet met de gemeente Gods kunnen samenkomen, dan laten we ons niet door de wereld verleiden. Want eerstelijk geldt dan de regel zeer zeker, dat we Gode meer zullen gehoorzamen dan de menschen. Tweedens, berokkenen we onszelfen door zulk doen groote geestelijke schade. En einde-

lijk zal dit er toe leiden, dat we heel den sabbat verliezen, en dat men in dezen weg van Zondagsontheyliging zal doorgaan, ook, wanneer de oorlog over is. Houdt, wat gij hebt, opdat niemand uwe kroon neme!

H. H.

Nog Iets Over Ons Werk In Randolph

We zijn weer thuis gekomen van Randolph, waar we, zooals de lezers reeds weten, enkele dagen hebben gearbeid in het belang van de zaak des Heeren, zooals Hij die aan onze kerken heeft toevertrouwd. Den tienden September waren we van hier vertrokken, en den achttienden September keerden we terug. En daar de reis per auto naar Waupun een dag neemt, hebben we dus zeventien dagen in ons veld aldaar gearbeid. En met groot genoeg verrichtten we ons werk. Wel hadden we het druk. Wie in negentien dagen zes maal preekt, drie lezingen houdt, een dertig bezoeken aflegt, dikwijls urenlang met de menschen praat, de *Standard Bearer* intusschen verzorgt, meer dan zestien honderd mijlen per auto aflegt, heeft niet veel tijd te verspillen. Maar het was mij een geestelijk genot, om enkele dagen in dit werk bezig te zijn. In de eerste plaats herinnerde het mij aan de eerste jaren van ons bestaan, toen wij ditzelfde werk veel mochten verrichten, en de uitbreiding onzer kerken mochten zien. In de tweede plaats werd ik opnieuw versterkt in de overtuiging, dat de Heere ons wel waarlijk heeft geroepen, om de zaak van Zijne kerk op aarde op bijzondere wijze voor te staan, en dat er groote behoefte is aan zendingswerk, zooals wij dat geroepen zijn te doen, hoe ook onze tegenstanders dit mogen trachten te ontkennen. In de derde plaats, zooals ik in het laatste nummer van ons blad reeds opmerkte, gaf de Heere ons in de omstreken van Randolph een open deur. Dit laatste bleek uit alles. De opkomsten, vooral op Zondag, waren boven verwachting. En we werden in den regel door de menschen, die we bezochten, met open armen ontvangen. Een enkele keek ons wel eens aan, alsof hij of zij zeggen wou. "uw spoedig vertrek zal mij zeer aangenaam zijn"; maar over het algemeen was men zeer bereidwillig, om met ons te spreken over de zaak des Heeren. En dit persoonlijk werk trekt mij altijd aan. Ons zendingswerk is een heerlijk werk, en voor wie er persoonlijk in bezig is, ook een aangename werk. Er zijn natuurlijk wel minder aangename zijden aan dien arbeid, doch dat is altijd het geval, het maakt niet uit, wat men doet, Maar om de zuivere gereformeerde waarheid te verkondigen, en alle dwaling te bestrijden, met Gods volk te spreken over die waar-

heid, die ze dikwijls in hun jeugd wel hebben gekend, maar in lang niet hebben gehoord, en alzoo te werken en te strijden voor de reformatie der kerken, en dan te ervaren, dat de Heere een open deur geeft en ook positieve vrucht op den arbeid geeft,—dat is met-terdaad geestelijk genot voor wie de zaak des Heeren liefheeft. En zoo was het met ons.

Het ligt haast wel in den aard der zaak, dat we in dit werk niet meer dezelfde methode kunnen volgen als een vijftien jaren geleden. Toen leefde de zaak, die wij voorstaan, in veler harten, en stond ze althans meer of min helder voor veler bewustzijn ook buiten eigen kring. Men kon toen in een zekere omgeving vergaderingen beleggen om te spreken over de “Drie Punten” en hun beteekenis, op een goede opkomst rekenen, en zonder veel inleiding over die punten spreken en duidelijk maken, hoe ze in den grond afwijken van de gereformeerde belijdenis. Dat is thans niet meer het geval. De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken achten, nadat ze die punten als een stok hebben gebruikt, om ons er mee te slaan, hen niet van genoeg belang, om ze op den voorgrond te stellen. Integendeel, ze vergeten ze liever. Vele menschen hebben nooit van de drie punten gehoord. En de meesten weten niet, wat hun inhoud is. Men kan dus niet meer met de deur in huis vallen, en spreken over de “Drie Punten”. Dit will natuurlijk niet zeggen, dat onze “twist met moeder” heeft opgehouden, of ook, dat die twist thans over een ander geschil loopt. In den grond der zaak gaat het ook thans over het punt der souvereine genade Gods. Maar wel wil dit zeggen, dat we een andere methode dienen te volgen, en de zaak langs een anderen weg hebben te benaderen, dan in de eerste jaren van ons bestaan. Door positieve prediking en voorstelling van de waarheid in lezingen en persoonlijke gesprekken, alsmede door alle dwaling tegen de waarheid strijdend, aan de kaak te stellen, scherp en overtuigend, worden de menschen vanzelf wakker geschud. Men behoeft daarbij aanstonds de “Drie Punten” niet bij name te noemen. En Gods volk geeft u daarbij getuigenis, dat hetgeen ge verkondigt de waarheid is. Velen hebben er ook nog wel van gehoord, dat wij de “algemeene genade” loochenen, en ze hebben daarvan meestal een vreemde voorstelling. Ook daar kunnen we dikwijls een aanknoopingspunt vinden, en de menschen op dit punt beter onderwijzen. En eindelijk zijn er ook nog altijd verkeerde en leugenachtige geruchten van ons in omloop, die niet zelden door onkundige of kwaadwillige predikanten worden verspreid of in het leven gehouden. En zulke geruchten schijnen vooral weer levendig te worden, als men in de buurt komt om de menschen beter in te lichten. Zoo vertelde een Christelijke Gereformeerde broeder mij, dat zijn predikant hem had verteld, dat ondergeteekende de schuld was, dat de bekende vergadering in de Pantlind in 't water is gevallen, terwijl ieder deskundige

(Dr. Schilder met name) wel weet, dat het precies andersom is. Een andere broeder kwam mij na den namiddagdienst vertellen, dat dien Zondagmorgen zijn dominé mij met name genoemd had van den kansel, als iemand, die van de menschen stokken en blokken maakte, een mensch met een ziekelijke voorstelling, die de hoorders wijs maakte, dat ze maar heelemaal niets moesten doen. Ook daarin vinden we, vooral in persoonlijk gesprek, dikwijls een aanknoopingspunt. Maar zeker is wel, dat iemand, die dit werk op zich neemt, een andere methode dient te volgen dan die van de eerste jaren van ons bestaan.

Onze tijd was te kort in Randolph. We hadden een paar weken langer moeten kunnen werken. Maar ik geloof dat er onder des Heeren zegen, binnen niet al te langen tijd aldaar eene geneemte tot stand kan komen, en ook dient tot stand te komen. Laten we die zaak gedenken in ons gebed!

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

OF MAN'S REDEMPTION

Chapter II

LORD'S DAY VI.

Q. 16. Why must he be very man, and also perfectly righteous?

A. Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which hath sinned, should likewise make satisfaction for sin; and one, who is himself a sinner, cannot satisfy for others.

Q. 17. Why must he in one person be also very God?

A. That he might, by the power of his Godhead sustain in his human nature, the burden of God's wrath; and might obtain for, and restore to us, righteousness and life.

Q. 18. Who then is that Mediator, who is in one person both very God, and a real righteous man?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ: “who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

Q. 19. Whence knowest thou this?

A. From the holy gospel, which God himself

first revealed in Paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly, has fulfilled it by his only begotten Son.

1.

The Necessity of the Incarnation

There is some difference between the original German text of the answer to question eighteen, and our translation of it. The German reads: "Unser Herr Jesus Christus, der uns zu vollkommenen Erlösung und Gerechtigkeit geschenkt ist". In English the correct rendering would be: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is given unto us for complete redemption and righteousness". Our translation follows the Latin text, which in turn, evidently followed the text of I Cor. 1:30: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." To the sense, however it makes no real difference, whether the one or the other translation is adopted, though it must be remembered that the one that follows the German text, which is the original, is the more correct one.

As to the contents of this sixth Lord's Day, the first two questions are still concerned with the question of a possible mediator, and, particularly, with the necessity of his being both very God and real righteous man in unity of person; the third question places us at once before the real Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, in all the fulness of His saving riches and power; and the last question points to the holy gospel as the source of our knowledge of this Mediator.

As we consider the first two questions of this sixth Lord's Day, we are once more impressed by the fact that our instructor takes his time about the matter. We are even inclined to remark that he is rather slow in coming to the point. After investigating the possibility of salvation, and insisting on the necessity of satisfaction; and after having pointed out the impossibility of satisfaction by man himself, or by any other, mere creature; the Catechism had, in the previous Lord's Day, reached the conclusion, that if ever we are to be saved it must be through a mediator that is at once very God, and real righteous man. And now, in the sixth Lord's Day, instead of immediately pointing to the only Mediator of God and man, the instructor first devotes two more questions to a *possible* mediator, and to the reasons why he must meet some very definite requirements. Ministers that are required to preach on the Catechism must often have the feeling, when they reach this sixth Lord's Day, that it is difficult to avoid repetition of what was already treated in connection with the preceding Lord's Day. And, in fact, there is a measure of repetition here. What is stated negatively in Lord's Day V, to make plain that it is impossible for man or for a mere

creature to bring the required satisfaction, is here stated positively. There it is explained that God will not punish any other creature for the sin man committed; here it is stated that God requires that the same human nature that has sinned shall make satisfaction for sin. There we were taught that we ourselves cannot make the required satisfaction, because we are sinners, and can only increase our debt; here we are told that one who is himself a sinner cannot satisfy for others. There the reason why no mere creature can deliver us was found in the fact that a mere creature cannot sustain the wrath of God and deliver others from it; here we are taught that a possible mediator must be very God, in order that, by the power of his Godhead, he might be able to sustain the wrath of God, and that he might be able to obtain for us, and to restore to us righteousness and life. There can be no question about the fact, therefore, that there is a measure of repetition of what was treated before in this sixth Lord's Day. The same arguments are used. Only, while in the previous Lord's Day the instructor adduced these arguments to demonstrate the impossibility of salvation by man or any other, mere, creature; in this Lord's Day the same elements are brought forward in order to give reasons for the necessity of the incarnation. This, therefore, must be borne in mind when we explain the first two questions of Lord's Day VI. And when we consider them from this viewpoint, we can appreciate the fact that the instructor is rather slow in coming to the point, and that he demonstrates the necessity of the real manhood, the righteous manhood, the very Godhead, and the unity of the person of the mediator that is to deliver us from sin and death.

We must remember that, at a very early date in the history of the New Testament Church, all these different elements of the truth concerning the Saviour were denied, one after another, by false teachers. It was denied that Christ possessed a real and complete human nature. There were some who taught that His human nature was only such in appearance, not in reality, not of our flesh and blood; even as angels can and often did assume the appearance of men for a time, so the Son of God assumed the resemblance of a human nature. There were others, who insisted that Christ assumed only a partial, not a whole or complete human nature: the Son of God, the divine nature, took upon Himself a human body and a human soul, but no human "mind", or "spirit". The divine nature took the place of the human *nous* or mind. Then, too, at an early date of our era, the real and essential Godhead of Christ was attacked and denied: Christ was a highly gifted and exalted man, who, according to His exalted position and office, is worthy of the title "Son of God", but who is not one in essence and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Again, by some, both

the real Godhead and the real manhood of Christ, was denied, when they explained that through the incarnation the human and divine natures had merged or fused into one nature. They preferred to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Godman, the "Theanthropos". And, on the other hand, by others the unity of the two natures in the one person was denied; and they so separated the two natures that Christ really became two persons. This controversy about the person of the Mediator was brought to a close, as far as the Church was concerned, by the decisions of the council of Chalcedon, in 381, which declared that Christ is very God and real righteous man, and that the two nature of Christ subsist in unity of divine Person, without change, without mixture, without division, and without separation.

When one considers these early attacks upon the truth concerning the Saviour, His person and natures, and is aware of the fact that all or most of these heresies repeatedly arise in the Church on earth, and attempt to destroy the true Christian doctrine concerning Christ and salvation, he will be able to appreciate properly the efforts put forth by the Heidelberg Catechism to demonstrate the *necessity* of the two natures, and of the unity of the person of Christ. For by so doing, it emphasizes the importance and preciousness of the truth, and it impresses upon believers the urgency of the calling to maintain and defend the true faith in all its purity of doctrine. It shows that there is an inseparable relation between our salvation and true doctrine. Salvation cannot be accomplished except by exactly such a mediator as is described in these two questions and answers with respect to his chief requirements. Deny them, and you deny salvation. Deny that Christ is eternal God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, and you have no Saviour left. Deny that He is very man, flesh of our flesh, and blood of our blood, and you lose the Christ of God. Deny that these two natures are never separated, nor ever mixed, but that they subsist in unity of the divine person of the Son of God, and you deny all possibility of salvation. By demonstrating this, the Catechism certainly impresses upon our minds and hearts the necessity of being indoctrinated thoroughly in the truth of the Word of God. And it warns us that we shall not assume a sympathetic attitude toward those that would introduce false doctrine into the Church of Christ in the world.

The Catechism considers the necessity of the incarnation only from the viewpoint of its relation to our salvation. This is wholly in accord with its practical character. It is possible, of course, to view this necessity from a different aspect, and to consider it from a higher, a theological point of view. The ultimate reason for all necessity, for every "must", is the eternal counsel and good pleasure of God. It was God's

eternal purpose that in Christ as the incarnated, crucified, raised and glorified Son of God, all the fulness of God should dwell bodily. And as we stressed before, this is not an afterthought of God, so that Christ is appointed only to repair what has been marred and destroyed by sin and the devil; but it is God's first and only final purpose. He purposed to reveal Himself, and to realize His everlasting covenant, and thus to glorify His holy name, in the highest possible degree. And this revelation is to be realized in Christ, the Son in the flesh, crucified and raised from the dead. Thus it is God's good pleasure. And it is for this reason that Christ is called the firstborn of every creature, i.e. the firstborn in and according to the eternal counsel of God, for whom and through whom, and unto whom all things are created. If we consider the necessity of the incarnation from this higher viewpoint, even sin and death, the devil and all the powers of darkness, are but means unto an end: they are subservient to God's purpose of bringing His Son into the world, and of realizing in and through Him all His good pleasure. However, our instructor does not consider the necessity of the incarnation in its relation to God and His eternal good pleasure, but in its soteriological relation to sin and salvation.

Why, then, must our mediator be very man, real man, and also perfectly righteous? The Catechism answers that he must be very man because satisfaction must be made in the human nature, the same human nature that has sinned; and that he must be righteous man, because no sinner could satisfy for the sin of others. He must be *very*, i.e. real man. And a real man is one that partakes of our human nature. He must not assume a temporary appearance of a human being, for then he is not related to us. He must not come in a specially created human nature, for then he stands outside of the scope of our race. He must be of us. He must subsist in the very human nature that was created in the beginning, and as far as his humanity is concerned, he must have been with us in the loins of Adam. He must be a very real "son of man". This is necessary, for otherwise He cannot make the required satisfaction. As we have seen before, God will not punish the sin of man in another creature. This same truth is now positively stated: "the justice of God requires that the same human nature which hath sinned, should likewise make satisfaction for sin." The punishment inflicted must be equivalent to the sin committed; the evil suffered must be commensurate to the evil done. Such is God's justice. Human sin is sin committed in and through the human nature, the human soul, the human mind and will and heart, the human body, the human eye and ear and mouth and hand and foot; such sin can be atoned for only by suffering human punishment, i.e. death in the human nature. A cow or a dog could not possibly receive the

punishment for sin committed in the human nature. We may add here, that Christ must also be very man, and actually subside in our nature, because as mediator He must be able to deliver us from death, and impart His own new resurrection-life to us, and this is possible only if He is organically related to us, if He partakes of our human nature. It would be quite impossible to transfuse the blood of a horse into the veins of a human body; and similarly, the resurrected Lord could never transfuse His own life into our hearts, if He were not related to us. A mediator that is to save us, i.e. who is to make the required satisfaction, and who is also able to deliver us from the power of sin and the dominion of death, and give us new life, must be very man.

But he must also be perfectly righteous. This means, first of all, that he must not fall under the imputation of Adam's first transgression. Though, according to his nature, he is like us in all respects, and was with us in the loins of Adam, yet he must not personally stand in the same relation to the first man Adam as we. He must have no original guilt. Secondly, this also implies that he must be free from original pollution. Even though he is a son of man, born of woman, blood of our blood, and flesh of our flesh, yet the defilement and pollution that adheres to all men, to the whole human nature, may not cleave to him. He must be perfectly righteous. And the reason which the Heidelberg Catechism here gives is, that "one, who is himself a sinner, cannot satisfy for others". The underlying thought here seems to be that one, who is himself a sinner, would have to satisfy for himself, and could never apply his satisfaction to others. And this is self evident. But we may go a step further, and say that no sinner can bring the required satisfaction at all, not even for himself. This truth we have repeatedly tried to make plain. Let it suffice now, therefore, to remind ourselves that to satisfy the justice of God with respect to sin, one must be able to bring the perfect sacrifice of love. Nothing less will do. And one, who is himself a sinner, is wholly incapable to bring that sacrifice. A mediator, that is to save us, therefore, must be perfectly righteous; he must have neither original guilt, nor original pollution; and all his life and death must be perfectly consecrated to the living God.

But why must our mediator also be very God? In the conclusion of the previous Lord's Day it was stated that the "sort of a mediator" we need must be "more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also very God". Let us take note of this, lest we receive a wrong conception of what this name "mediator" indicates. Often it is presented as if a mediator is someone, who stands in between God and man. They, i.e. God and man, are at variance. They are separated from each other. And now a third

party interposes himself between them to bring them together. He reconciles God to man, and man to God. But let us notice here, that the Catechism knows nothing of intermediary beings between God and man. A mere creature, so it is taught us, cannot sustain the wrath of God and deliver others. Very well; a mediator must, therefore, be more powerful than any mere creature. Does that mean that we must look for a third, a kind of intermediate being, that is greater than all creatures, yet is not very God? But no; if mere creature is incapable of sustaining the wrath of God, there is only one other possibility: that God does it Himself! O, indeed, the mediator we need must also be very man. He must be God and man united. But do not make the mistake that for this reason you consider this mediator a sort of intermediate being, standing between God and man. For such a mediator, who is real man and very God, could not possibly come into being by an act of God and man both, by each coming half way to meet the other; but the very idea of such a mediator implies that God Himself comes down, reaches down all the way to man's low estate, to become His own mediator in our behalf!

Very God the mediator must be. That means that He must be of the divine essence. He must be the eternal One Himself, the I AM, the infinite God, Who exists in Himself, and has life in Himself, Who is the almighty, the allwise, the omniscient, the Lord of all! The mediator must not be a god, but he must be very God! For, first of all, the Catechism reminds us, he must sustain, "ertragen", bear completely bear through, and bear to the end, the wrath of God against sin; and this no mere creature can do. There must be divine power to bear to the end, and to bear away, to bear and live through divine wrath. Hence, the mediator we need must be very God. And there must be a very intimate relation, a close union between the divine and the human nature of this mediator. For, although the mere human nature could never sustain the wrath of God and live, yet, it must be in that human nature that the wrath of God must be borne! The divine nature could not be the object of the divine wrath. Nor can the divine nature suffer and die. The relation between the real manhood and true Godhead of this mediator, therefore, must be such, that in the human nature the divine nature sustains the infinite wrath of God, that God bears the punishment for sin in the human nature! He must, therefore, not only be real man and very God, but be man and God in one person! Only then can he sustain the wrath of God to the end and live. Only then can he give infinite value to his atoning sacrifice. And only then can he deliver us from the power of sin and death, and restore to us righteousness and life! Indeed, the incarnation is necessary. Without it there is no possible salvation.

H. H.

The Brazen Serpent

The desert period of Israel's national existence has ended. The command has been given that the journey to the promised land be resumed. Beginning at mount Hor, the way led by the Red Sea, and encompassed the land of Edom. The journey was difficult and the people became impatient and disgusted because of the way. They rebelled against the guidance of God and the leading of Moses. They said, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this despicable bread," they said, meaning the manna. Undoubtedly they were weary to the point of exhaustion and famished. So, in their unbelief, in their willing ignorance of all that God had been and done for them in the past, they concluded that they would now have to perish in the way. The presence of the manna in their midst meant nothing to them. It was a despicable bread, so they said, unfit for human consumption. And they heartily loathed it. Their unbelief grew out of the same delusion which the previous generation had expressed; and the sin, which they at this juncture committed, was just as great.

The ground of the terrain, through which their way now crossed, was full of holes, the home of serpents. And the judicial providence of God used the obnoxious product of the land for punishment, converting the serpents of the desert into a divine punitive visitation. The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people—fiery, literally, burning serpents; so called from the inflammatory nature of their bite, which infused a deadly, burning poison, and also perhaps from their fiery red color. Much people died, for the swarm of serpents was extraordinary large. The terror of the people, increased by their conscience awakened to a sense of guilt, was great. They confessed that they had sinned against Jehovah their God, and against Moses and besought him to intercede in their behalf. The remedy was adapted to the situation. Moses was commanded to make him a fiery serpent—an image of one—and to set it upon a pole or standard and it should come to pass that every one that was bitten, when he looked upon it, should live. Such was the promise to which fully corresponded the miraculous results.

This event rises into great importance through the application which Christ Himself makes of it to His own life. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life". John 3:14.

It is the brazen serpent that forms the subject of this essay. Let us consider this object (1) as to its

direct bearing on the people of Israel and (2) as to its typical reference to Christ.

The brazen serpent signified certain vital truths which the church of that day had need of hearing in order to participate in the salvation of God. To know what these truths are, attention must be directed first to the living reptiles by which the rebellious Israelites were bitten. What did these creatures signify? Some hold that they have to do with the serpent in Eden or with the devil, the old serpent. According to others, they signify in the first place the devil, then sin, then further inherited, original sin. Still others make them the symbol of judgment, punishment, curse and evil, as borne not by fallen man but by Christ, and hold that in this view the mystery, in its great features, soon comes to light. The view of evil in the confidence that it is Jehovah's remedy against sin, this, it is said, is the main thing.

Now the divers views, presented above, divide into two sorts. In the one class, the living serpents signify sin in the sense of moral corruption; in the other, they appear as the symbol of the punishment of sin as Christ bore it in His flesh.

It is plain that both these views cannot be correct. The trouble with interpreters in general is that they fail to differentiate between the living vipers and the brazen serpent made after the similitude of these vile creatures. The brazen serpent was a type of Christ but not those vipers.

Just what did the latter signify? It is certain that among God's irrational creatures, the living (not the brazen) serpent, thus also the vipers of the wilderness, is preeminently the symbol of sin, of all that is sinful, corrupt, vile, thus of doom, the curse, the ban of God. It was to the serpent that God said, "thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field."

This makes the serpent the symbol firstly of the devil, the murderer of mankind, the liar from the beginning, the originator of the lie with which he instigated our first parents to disobey God's command. This was the first bite of the serpent.

If the serpent signifies the devil, it also signifies his brood, the natural man, dead in sin. This is plain from the language that the Scripture uses in speaking of this man. At Ps. 140: 1-3 it is said of the violent and evil man that he sharpens his tongue like a serpent, and that adders' poison is under his lips. In reproving the pharisees, Christ calls them serpents, a generation of vipers. And so, too, the Baptist.

Properly, the serpent signifies the principle of sin as it riots in the essence of fallen man's (and also the devil's) being. The serpent lurks in man's own bosom, corrupting his whole nature and producing in him all sorts of sin, becoming in him a root thereof. It is this conception of sin that we encounter in Romans

7, where the statement occurs, "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law, sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died". Sin as an active principle in man, working in him all manner of sin through the intervention of the law of God, without which it remains an unknown power—this is the working of the adder in man. So in the case of the Jews of the wilderness. The serpent that slumbered in their bosom, taking occasion by the will of God that they bear the hardships of the journey with patience and know that man lives by every outgoing of God's mouth, revived. Reviving, it bit them, produced in them wanton rebellion.

The serpent, in fine, signifies sin, curse, doom, the ban of God.

As to the serpent of brass it was not by itself a serpent but was made one. "Make thee," said the Lord to Moses, "a fiery serpent". It was thus made after the exact similitude (make thee a *fiery* serpent) of the living reptiles of the wilderness, thus made sin, a curse (symbolically), so made, in other words, as to show forth the cursedness of the vipers without being seen as armed with their poison. For, being what it was, a thing of pure metal, it was, from the nature of matters, devoid of this poison.

Being made a curse, this harmless, poisonless lifeless thing was set upon a pole or tree. This bespoke its ban—the ban of God—branded it a curse, and exposed it to view a sin-offering. These certainly were the reasons of its elevation. It is not correct to say that the sole purpose of the lifting up of the brazen serpent was to render its conspicuous. Were this true, there would be no point to this doing. The confession that God demands of the sinner is that he is saved through faith in one—Christ Jesus—who was made sin. A man may look upon the Saviour ever so steadfastly, believe in Him ever so firmly, but if he refuses to see in Him one who bore for His people the burden of divine wrath against sin, he perishes in his sin.

Thus what the bitten Israelites were commanded to behold was a gracious provision of God, made like unto the reptiles by which they had been bitten, but free from their poison, thus an object altogether harmless, taken in their stead and made for them a sin and a curse. So it appears that the brazen serpent is indeed a symbol of the punishment of sin.

Looking upon this object, the wounded Israelites were cured. Thus the poisonous bite of the serpent in the wilderness was healed through the beholding of a harmless brazen serpent made sin and as such exposed to view.

But the brazen serpent was after all but a lifeless thing. How could the beholding of it be rewarded by the cure of a serpent's deadly bite? The brazen ser-

pent was by itself nothing at all. Yet it was the power of God unto the cure of the serpent's bite. The reasons are two. The brazen serpent revealed the righteousness of God. It declared, together with the sacrifices by blood, that Zion was to be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness. It proclaimed the virtues of God, now seen in the face of Christ. Because it did so, God affixed to it the promise of His healing and His will, determination, to heal all such who by His mercy received the brazen serpent as the God-appointed remedy for their physical wounds. Upon that object, the Lord imposed, to say, His almighty, healing blessing word. Hence, to look upon this object was at once to look up to God. Their beholding it was thus the exercise of faith in the willingness and power of God to heal their wounds.

And all they were asked to do is to behold the brazen serpent. Through the bringing of the sacrifice by blood the ancient worshipper also gave expression to his faith in the willingness of the Lord to pardon transgression and to redeem the life of His people from destruction. Here, however, faith was expressed through a symbolical transaction consisting in the sacrifice of an animal partly through the agency of the priest. Here we meet with action that could be construed, and so the carnal Jews did construe it, as forming a kind of meritorious basis for God's benefits. But it could not very well be maintained that the dying Israelites merited with God simply through looking upon His provision for the healing of their diseases. The requirement that they do nothing at all but look upon this object, the cure, the instant recovery, that accompanied such beholding, was well calculated to drive home the fact and truth that salvation is solely by grace through faith and not of works.

The brazen serpent, it is plain, was a most remarkable symbol. It so forcibly and clearly declared that the remedy of sin is sin's curse as born by God's appointed innocent substitute, and that salvation is solely through faith in this remedy.

2. The brazen serpent was not God's true remedy of sin. It was given for the healing merely of a physical wound, inflicted by the poisonous bite of a natural, creatural reptile. The power of God associated with it was for the healing of the body and not of the soul. It was thus truly a visible sign and a seal, appointed of God to declare and seal to the true children of the covenant the promise of the gospel. As such it was, in the final instance, a type of Christ, and this according to Christ's own word, "As Moses lifted up the serpent so must the Son of man be lifted up . . ." "What was done with the serpent on the low plane of the typical-symbolical, *must* be done with me on the high plane of the heavenly realities'. Such certainly is the thrust of this utterance of Christ. He does not, by this word, place the lifting up of

the serpent on a level with His own. He takes this event in the desert for what it is—*a* doing of His heavenly Father, prefiguring His, the Christ's, atonement.

Being what it is, a prophetic type, the brazen serpent conveys definite points of instruction about Christ, namely, the following:

(a) The brazen serpent was made like unto the poisonous vipers of the wilderness in one thing only, to wit, in outward appearance. It was thus made sin but merely in this respect that, due to this resemblance, it reflected, as a thing inanimate, the cursedness of the vile creatures which it imaged without its lifeless structure housing their poison.

The living Christ was made like unto His fallen brethren *in all things*. He owned their guilt assumed their nature, bore in His sinless flesh their griefs, carried their sorrows, and was wounded for their transgressions. So, in this respect, was He made sin and did He exhibit in His flesh the curse and punishment due to sin.

(b) The brazen serpent was lifted up. Christ was hanged on the ignominious cross—so the justice of God demanded—and thus exposed to view as the *true* sin-offering. From His cross He was lifted up into the highest heavens and is set before all creatures as the only and true remedy of sin through the preaching of the gospel. For, God so loved the world.

(c) Whosoever looked upon the brazen serpent was healed of a physical wound. Whosoever looks upon Christ is truly and permanently healed of all his diseases and has life everlasting. For He is the only remedy for all the spiritual wounds inflicted by the serpent's bite. Anointed with the oil of gladness, He is the true balm in Gilead.

G. M. O.

IN MEMORIAM

The consistory of the Prot. Ref. Church at Doon, Iowa, herewith desires to express their sympathy to Elder H. Kuiper in the death of his wife

MRS. HENRY KUIPER

May the God of all mercy and grace give to him and his family a rich measure of His Holy Spirit to comfort them in this hour of deep bereavement.

The Consistory

P. Zylstra

S. Stellinga

The Fulness Of The Time

The expression "fulness of time" occurs in scripture and is found at Gal. 4:4. The passage reads, "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son . . ."

The surroundings of this text show that the *fulness of time* is the time appointed by God, which was to elapse until the appearing of Christ. It is of this time that the apostle speaks in the preceding three verses, the time of the state of minority of the church. This period is conceived as a measure that had to be filled ere the Son of God could be sent. And the measure was filled, the "Fulness of time" was come, when that moment of time, *through* which the measure was filled, arrived. This then is the thought conveyed; (1) When the precise moment appointed by God had arrived, He sent forth His Son. (2) Christ had to be sent precisely at that moment, no sooner, no later. (3) The precise time, when He appeared, had a peculiar relation to His appearance. (4) The antecedent steps, through the previous development of the history of the church in particular and of the world at large in general, had been directed by God precisely to this point in order to admit of His appearing.

To bring out the truth of these statements, we must get before our eye these steps. That there were such steps means that both the church and the world had been brought into such a condition as to admit of Christ's coming.

The gentile world. The prevalent view is that this world had been brought into a state of receptivity with respect to Christ, His gospel. So the historian Schaff. Though he sets out with defining heathenism as a religion in its wild growth on the soil of fallen human nature, a darkening of the original consciousness of God, a deification of the rational and irrational creature, and a corresponding corruption of the moral sense, giving the sanction of religion to natural and unnatural vices, he nevertheless maintains that "there was a spiritual Israel scattered throughout the heathen world, that never received the circumcision of the flesh, but the unseen circumcision of the heart by the hand of the Spirit which bloweth where it listeth, and is not bound to any human laws and to ordinary means". The notable representatives of this group were, according to this writer, such personages as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pindar, Sophecles, Cicero, Virgel, Seneca and Plutarch. They were personages whose beautiful and true sentences may be called "the testimonies of a soul constitutionally Christian, of a nature predestined to Christianity".

The historian Walker declares that the world—the heathen world—at the coming of Christ largely de-

manded, was crying for, a religion that taught one righteous God; possessed a definite revelation of the will of God, held forth a future life with rewards and punishment; promised a real forgiveness of sins; possessed a redeemer-God who could come into union with men by certain sacramental acts; a religion, finally that taught the brotherhood of man. Hence, Christianity must possess or take on all these traits if it was to conquer the Roman empire or to become a world religion.

The flower of this spiritual aptitude, of this receptivity, for the truth of God, for the Christ of the Gospels, constituted the sign, such is the view, that the fulness of time had come, that God therefore could send forth His Son into the world—a world ready to embrace Him and to take home to its heart His gospel of peace.

We come upon like sentiments in the work of dogmatics of Dr. H. Bavinck. The concluding statement of his delineation on this subject reads, "Daarom staat het Christendom niet uitsluitend antithetisch tegen het heidendom over; het is er ook de vervulling van . . . Wat ginds gezocht wordt is hier te vinden . . . Christus is de beloofde aan Israel en de wensch aller heidenen."

Such is the view. All that we have to say about it is that it runs contrary to Scripture, to what the Scriptures tell us about this heathenism. The heathendom of the pre-Messianic period, i.e., the Graeco-Roman world of men, was indeed spiritually prepared for the advent of Christ. But the preparation had been purely negative, away from Christ. There had been growth indeed but in sin. The apostle passes in review its stages. (1) Because when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds and fourfooted beasts . . . Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their bodies between themselves. (Rom. 1: 21-24). A forsaking of God ending in gross idolatry accompanied by unnatural sexual vice—the first stage. (2) Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature, more than the Creator . . . For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men . . . (verses 25-27). Persistent idolatry accompanied by most revolting sexual immorality—the second stage. (3) And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do things which are not convenient: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness,

maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful (verses 28-32). Persistent idolatry going hand in hand with the eruption of all manner of sins the final stage.

What we have described to us here is a process of development in sin over an extended period, a gradual sinking away into the morass of superstition, sin, and crime, so that, when the fulness of time was come the state of civilized heathendom was one of complete spiritual and moral dissolution. And it is God who gave them over through the lusts of their own hearts. Sin was continually being punished with sin. Without interruption the wrath of God was revealed from heaven over all unrighteousness.

Yet, there seems to be some truth in the statement that in the pre-Messianic period the religious and moral development of heathendom was inclined toward Christ. The gentile Sergius Paulus, deputy of the isle of Paphos, desired to hear the Word of God and, under the constraint of this desire, called for Barnabas and Paul to preach to him the gospel. At Acts 17:4 it is reported that a great number of *devout* Greeks believed and consorted with Paul and Barnabas. In the Acts of the apostles, the gentile Cornelius in Caesarea stands before us as "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway". It was to meet the need of these gentiles for Christ that God sent to them His servants with His gospel. "Thy prayers," said God to Cornelius, "are come up for a memorial before God. Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter and he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." But Cornelius, devoutness and need of Christ was not certainly the flowering of a natural religion. This man was one of the several gentiles the soil of whose heart had been previously prepared by the scriptures, by the truth. The knowledge of the Scriptures had been spread far and wide by the dispersed Jews. It is estimated that at the time of Christ there were six times as many Jews outside of Palestine as within its borders. A notable part of the population of Alexandria were Jews. Jews had settled in Asia Minor and in Syria. They were to be found in Rome. Few were the cities of the empire where there were no Jews. This Judaism of the Dispersion had the sacred scriptures. It took with it everywhere the synagogue. These synagogues had about them a large number of proselytes and Judaized converts, the devout men made mention of in the Acts of the Apostles. In fine, it is the scriptures mixed with true faith and not pagan religion and culture that had paved the way for Christ. But when the fulness of time was come,

the great mass of men of the pagan civilized world were steeped in sin and prostrated before the shrine of their idols, were thus strangers to this faith, enemies of God and of the gospel of Christ. Such was the state of affairs in that world when the fulness of time was come. It was a world that bore all the marks of being hopelessly lost.

Of the outward condition of this world we present the following description. The lands surrounding the Mediterranean were in the possession of Rome. These territories embraced all that common men knew of civilized life. The Roman empire and the world of civilized men were co-extensive. All was held together by allegiance to a single emperor, and by a common military system subject to him. The Roman army preserved the Roman peace. Under that peace commerce flourished, communion was made easy by excellent roads and by sea. In the larger towns a common language was spoken—that of Greece. It was an empire whose officials secured a rough justice such as the world had never seen.

The condition in which the people of Israel—the church—had been brought deserves special attention. It is especially with a view to the church that the apostle declares, “When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son . . . to redeem them that were under the law . . .” God had put the church under the law to school it unto Christ, until the time appointed—the fulness of time. Through the demands of the law and the working of its curse in the bosom of the nation through the centuries, the Lord trained His people to live by the promise and to wait for the consolation of Israel. So, when the fulness of time was finally come, yearning was deep, and hope lively and the expectation of the true Israel ran high. The aged Simeon took the Christ-child up in his arms and blessed God and said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel”. And Anna, the widow, coming in at that instant “gave thanks likewise unto the Lord and spake of him to all that looked for the redemption in Jerusalem.” There *were* those who looked for redemption. The law with all that appertains thereto—the typical symbolical institutions which it prescribed, the judgments of God that overtook the nation on account of its repeated apostacies and that, when the old dispensation was drawing to a close, had worked the destruction of so much of Israel’s typical glory—the law had indeed done its work.

This does not mean that when the fulness of time was come the true Israel had Christ directly before their eye. What it means is that through the law the Lord worked in the bosom of the church the necessary

expectancy and yearning for salvation. But the church was still contemplating the promised deliverance largely as deliverance from foreign oppression. The true people of God were. This can be explained. In the past salvation had always assumed this form. When the people of Israel forsook the Lord, His anger would kindle against them. Then the adversary would prevail in their borders. When they repented, He forgave them and sent deliverance. Thus what was hoped for, when the fulness of time was come, is a saviour, through whom Jehovah would again send salvation and so provide His people with fresh evidence that He loved them and in His love, pardoned their iniquities and delivered them from all their troubles. It was for a new token of this love that the true Israel yearned. The hope of this Israel, though mixed with much that is of this earth and of the flesh, was essentially pure. What the church lacked was insight into the mysteries of God, the reason being that the Spirit was not yet.

But the entering of the law had still another purpose, namely, that the offence might abound (Rom. 5:20). What motions of sin by the law! And through the centuries these motions worked to bring forth fruit unto death in the reprobate Jews, until, when the fulness of time was come, the measure of iniquity was full, the Israelitish nation was ripe for judgment and in its reprobated seed was spiritually capable of crucifying Christ, the Lord of glory.

Such then were the prevailing conditions when the precise moment arrived through which the measure of time became full. Christ had to be sent at that moment, at that time, when these conditions prevailed and no sooner. The Roman-Graeco world had to be sunk in all manner of debasing crimes, had to be giving itself up to all forms of idolatry. And in the Israelitish nation sin had to be abounding. So it had to be.

The reason is given by the apostle. Before God would send His Son, every mouth had to be stopped, and all the world had to become guilty before God. Before God could send His Son, it had to appear how absolutely true it is that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in His sight, that by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Rom. 3:19, 20).

Before God could send His Son, it had to appear that the world by wisdom knew not God (I Cor. 1:21). Indeed, the world had wisdom. It was an empire—was that world of Christ day—that, as was just said, had secured a justice such as the world had never before seen. And how proud it was of its wisdom! How proud of its intellectual achievements, of its wisemen, scribes, disputers, of its culture and civilization. Indeed! But by its wisdom it knew not God. By its wisdom it crucified the Christ. So did God show up this wisdom for what it is—foolishness, devilish.

"Where then is the wise? Where is the scribe. Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (I Cor. 1:20) The question comes to us all. It thus comes to the exponents of common grace. Where is this wisdom? In the apostle's day it was prostrated before the shrine of fourfooted beasts and of creeping things and was saying to these beasts and things, "Thou are my God". And this wisdom is supposed to be springing from a principle of grace common to all men?

By the deeds of the law shall no man be justified in His sight. This, once more, had to appear. God so willed for the sake of His son whom He was to send. For this Son, and this Son alone is man's righteousness sanctification wisdom and redemption. So, when the fulness of time was come God sent His Son. Let then every mouth be stopped! Consider that for centuries in that pre-Messianic period, God was giving over to a reprobate mind, through the lust of its own heart, mankind, to stop every mouth from boasting in man, in his goodness and wisdom. And every mouth is stopped. For God always gets His way in things. The mouth of His people is stopped through His saving grace. But the mouth of the wicked is stopped as well. For, said, Christ, "when he—the Spirit of truth—is come, he will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). The Spirit has come. Through the preaching of the Word, He hangs before every man, the apostle's depiction of the moral dissolution of mankind of his day; and the testimony of that picture, He, the Spirit, puts into every man's heart. In a word, He convicts every man of sin so that despite himself every man says in his heart: It is the truth. I am vile. If a man has grace in his heart, he turns to God a penitent sinner, and the voice of his conscience becomes the confession of his lips and the truth makes him free. But the wicked repress the truth, hold it under, boast in man's inherent goodness and despise Him—the Son, Whom God sent when "the fulness of the time was come". But he is without excuse. And his mouth is stopped.

G. M. O.

The earth and heaven shall pass away,
Like vesture worn and laid aside,
But changeless Thou shalt live for aye
Thy years forever shall abide.

As heaven is high above the earth
So great His mercy proves,
As far from us as east from west,
He all our sin removes.

Uit Zwakheid Krachten Hebben Gekregen

(Psalm 59)

Onwillekeurig dacht ik aan Hebreë 11, de verzen 32 tot 38, bij het lezen van dezen psalm; en meer bijzonder aan de woorden die boven dit artikel staan. En ik dacht ook aan den Middelaar en Zijne smarten, waarvan David een sterk type is. Jezus heeft de smart van David vervuld, zoovele jaren later.

Historisch is de achtergrond van dezen psalm de smart die David ervoer van zijn schoonvader Saul, die "gezonden had die zijn huis bewaren zouden, om hem te doden". We lezen die geschiedenis in I Sam. 19:11vv.

Het laatste wat David van Saul gezien had, was zijn door wreede haat verwrongen aangezicht en de spies die zijn hand verliet om hem aan den wand te spitten. Toen was David naar huis gesneld.

Doch de wreede Saul had boden gezonden met de opdracht om zijn huis te bewaren, ten einde hem op zijn gemak af te maken.

Doch Michal, David's vrouw had het David te kennen gegeven. Toen liet zij hem neder door een venster en hij ontkwam.

Wanneer David dezen zang dichtte? We weten het niet. Ik ben geneigd te geloven, dat hij het gedaan heeft in den nacht, toen de boden van Saul rondom het huis lagen, wachtende op den morgen om hem gevangen te nemen. De taal van den psalm leidt ons tot dit gevoel. Een kleinood weer, een gouden kleinood. De schoonste gestalte van God's volk is wanneer er drang en smart is: "Van strak gespannen snaren!"

En uit de zwakheid van dien nacht werd er door genade kracht geboren. We zullen er van hooren juichen in den zang.

Het begin is een schreeuw tot God: Red mij van mijne vijanden, O mijn God! Dat is het thema van de eerste drie verzen.

Let op de beschrijving der goddeloozen: vijanden, degenen die tegen David opstaan, werkers der ongerechtigheid en mannen des bloeds. Wat vreeselijk oordeel ligt al in die namen! Was David nu nog een kwaaddoener, een vlek der natie, dan ware het eenigzins te verontschuldigen. Doch David was God's gunsteling, een man naar Zijn hart. Het is wel waar, dat David zondig was, doch in dit geval was hij geheel en al onschuldig. Let op de verzen 4-6 en 13. In het vierde vers zegt David het met nadruk: "Want, zie, zij leggen mijner ziel lagen, sterken rotten zich tegen mij: zonder mijne overtreding en zonder mijne zonde, O Heere!" In het zesde vers maakt David onderscheid tusschen zonde en zonde. Hij klaagt tot God, dat men trouwelooslijk ongerechtigheid bedrijft. Er is een hemelsbreed verschil tusschen zonde en zonde. Elders

lezen we van een zondigen zonder oorzaak. De oorzaak der ongerechtigheid van Saul en zijn trawanten moest men opsporen in hun verdorven hart. David had geen aanleiding gegeven.

We zien het onverkwikkelijke tafereel: David in angst en beven met Michal in het huis, dat omsingeld is door de goddelooze trawanten van Saul. En die goddelooze Koning Israel's wacht ongeduldig op het nieuws van David's dood in den morgen. Hoe ongeduldig hij gewacht heeft blijkt wel uit het verhaal van I Sam. 19. Met taaie volharding, een betere zaak waardig, houdt hij vast aan zijn lieveling's idee: David moet dood; hij moet vernield worden. Als God Koning Saul tegentreedt en door Zijn macht en kracht de boden keer op keer verbijstert, zoodat zij profeteeren, dan geeft Saul het nog niet op. Zóó heet is de wraakzucht van Saul, dat we hem eindelijk ontbloot op de aarde zien liggen, al profeteerende. Israel ontving een spreekwoord: Is Saul ook onder de profeten?

Toen is David naar God gegaan: Red mij, O mijn God!

Stel mij in een hoog vertrek; verlos mij!

In kinderlijke eenvoud, oprecht en naar waarheid zal hij het den Heere vertellen. Zie het aan, Heere! Alsof God het niet zag! Zóó bidt het kinderlijke kind Gods! Zie het aan, Heere, ze leggen lagen rondom mijn huis in donkeren nacht! Mij is bange!

Zijn gebed wordt onstuimiger. We moeten het David niet euvel duiden, dat hij spreekt alsof God in slaap gevallen was. David wist wel, dat de wachter Israel's nimmer sluimerd, noch slaapt. Dat hij zoo spreekt is om aan te duiden den hoogen zielsnood die hem doet schreeuwen.

Dat onstuimige, hetwelk schoon is, blijkt ook uit de opeenstapeling van de namen Gods. Jehovah, Elohim, Sebaoth! In die namen zit alles in wat David behoeft in dien bangen nacht. Jehovah, de Eeuwige Getrouwe. Elohim, de God die te vreezen is. Sebaoth, de God der heirscharen, die alle krachten heeft.

Bezoek die heidenen rondom mijn huis, Heere! Spoed U ook naar hem die achter hen grijnst in zijn haat en wreedheid, O God!

En hoe zal God hen bezoeken?

Dat zal David ons zeggen. En ik wilde wel, dat al Gods volk oplettend wilde luisteren: zulk bidden wat nu volgt is deze eeuw vreemd. Stelt het U voor, David vraagt den Heere om niemand van hen genadig te zijn! Hoe kan het Christendom van heden dezen psalm zingen? David heeft toch zekerlijk door den Heiligen Geest gebeden? Psalm 59 is toch de Godsopenbaring zooals zij subjectief door David ervaren werd? Hoe kan men vasthouden aan de onfeilbare inspiratie der Heilige Schrift en dan toch leeren, dat God den goddeloozen genade bewijst? Is God tegen Zichzelf verdeeld? Kan de Heilige Geest in David snikkend vragen om de goddeloozen toch niet genadig te zijn

en tezelfver tijd met Vader en Zoon in goedertierenheid Zich neerbuigen tot 't goddelooze rot? Uw hart gaf het antwoord.

Vers zeven en acht zullen ons doen zien hoe vreeselijk goddeloos men handelde tegen David.

David was met zijn vrouw in huis en had niets kwalijk gedaan.

Doch onder zijn ramen en vensters broedden de heidenen. Tegen den avond, zoo lezen we, keeren zij weder, zij tieren als een hond, en zij gaan rondom de stad. Het is duidelijk, dat Saul een bende soldaten gebruikte voor dit duivelsche werk. We kunnen ons voorstellen hoe het er naar toe ging. Zij tierden als een hond. Reizigers die het Oosten bezochten vertellen ons, dat de honden daar geheel anders zijn dan bij ons. Bij ons is de hond de vriend des huizes, zacht, trouw, aanhankelijk. Dat gebeurde daar eenvoudig niet. De honden waren wild, bloeddorstig, kwaadaardig. In woeste benden dwaalden ze rond om alle afval, hetwelk op straat gegooid werd, te verslinden, al vechtende, brullende en verscheurende. Daarom worden de goddeloozen in God's Woord met honden vergeleken. Denkt om dien tekst: "doch buiten zullen zijn de honden..." (Openb. 22:15a).

David heeft in huis. Hij hoort geduriglijk de verheffing der stemmen die vanuit het donker tot hem opstijgen. Ge kunt merken uit de beschrijving van dit rumoer hoe bloeddorstig zij waren. We lezen, dat zij overvloediglijk met hunne mond uitstortten. Eigenaardige uitdrukking. Als ge er bij leest in de volgende phrase, dat zwaarden op hunne lippen waren, kunnen we wel eenigzins zien en hooren in onze verbeelding hoe het er dien nacht naar toe ging. Die bende soldaten heeft met verheffing van stemmen bedreigd, gevloekt, gespot en gehoond.

Wie denkt hier niet aan Golgotha?

De Christus heeft hetzelfde beeld gebruikt als David hier. Toen Hij omsingeld werd door de boosdoeners klaagde Hij tot God: "Want van rondom zie 'k honden samenrukken; een munitgespan heeft Mij ter prooi verkoren, Mijn handen en Mijn voeten doen doorboren, zoo fel het kan"!

Het bange verschil is echter, dat er voor den Messias geen hoog vertrek overbleef. Hij kon niet en mocht niet en, Gode zij eeuwig dank, Hij wilde niet vanuit een venster, langs den wand, in den donker ontsnappen. Toen 't donker werd is Hij blijven snikken in ongekende smart. Saul, neen, Satan heeft zijn lust aan Hem kunnen volbrengen. En vanuit de bovenste vensters des hemels daalde er neer op Zijn arme hoofd al den last des toorns die brandde, verteerde en 't Wezen versmolt. "Wat hitte doet Mij branden?" Ja, die bange vraag zullen de kleine kinderen in Uwe catechisatie-kassen wel beantwoorden. Zware theologie!

Voor David moet ge evenwel niet al te zeer treuren.

David heeft ondertusschen zijn God gevonden.

Tot hiertoe was hem zeer bang. Doch luistert nu: "Maar Gij, Heere, zult ze belachen, Gij zult alle heidenen bespotten!"

Dit is in één woord verschrikkelijk. Ook gebeurt het elken dag rondom U. Merkt het toch op! 't Is het begin Uwer dagelijksche redding. Ook al zou David voorts verscheurd zijn door die honden; ook al zou men Uw hijgen hooren overgaan in de laatste stervensnik, ook dan hebt ge alreede de overwinning. David zag de lachende en spottende God. Vreeselijk. We kunnen er in komen om de heidenen en vijanden Davids te beklagen. En om David liederen des heils te zingen.

Sta mij toe U een Nieuw Testamentisch beeld van David te schetsen toen hij den lachenden God zag. Om dat beeld te zien moeten we naar het paleis gaan, waar de Raad der Joden zitting hield. Daar zullen we U eerst de honden doen zien. Er staat: "En allen die in den Raad zaten, de oogen op hem houdende . . ." Later staat er dit: "berstten hunne harten en zij knersten de tanden tegen hem . . ." En nog later: "Maar zij roepende met groote stem, stopten hunne ooren, en vielen eendrachtelijk op hem aan, en wierpen hem ter stad uit, en steenigden hem." (Hand. 6:15a; 7:54c, 57, 58).

En al dit vreeselijk woeden tegen Stefanus en tegen David wordt gekarakteriseerd door de vraag van Psalm 59:8b: "want wie hoort het?"

Centraal werd dit aan Jezus gedaan; en naar de mate van het verschillend martelaarschap, ook aan die van Jezus zijn, vóór en na Golgotha.

Doch David werd verlost, want hij zag God. En Stefanus' verlossing dateert van het tijdstip toen hij den hemel geopend zag. Beide David en Stefanus zagen God. Eerder dacht Stefanus aan God en toen "zagen (zij) zijn aangezicht als het aangezicht eens Engels!" (Hand. 6:15c).

Tracht zulke mensen dan eens kwaad te doen! 't Kan niet.

Als ge ziet, dat God lacht en spot met de vijanden, dan wordt het stil. Hem komt de wrake toe. Hij zal 't vergelden.

Zoo kunt ge begrijpen, dat David zeide: "Tegen den sterke zal ik op U wachten, want God is mijn hoog vertrek". Dan spreken we niet van toelating of iets dergelijks. Neen, want dat verklaart het lachen Gods niet. God spot met dit honden-gebroed, want al hun kracht en al hun sterkte die ze zoo vreeselijk gebruiken vloeit hun van God toe. Doch zij wisten het niet. Tegen dien sterke, zullen wij op God wachten. David begreep, dat de Heere hem in die smarten geleid had en dat Hij hem ook verlossen zou. In wachten op God zit geduld, overgegevenheid, en een groot vertrouwen, dat Hij het maken zal.

En daarna tracht David de diepte te peilen van God's eeuwighe liefde; maar 't kan niet. Hij begint

te zingen van God's goedertierenheid.

Het woord dat hier gebruikt wordt beteekent letterlijk: een hartstochtelijk verlangen te hebben. Stelt het U voor: God heeft een groot verlangen, een verlangen dat zóó groot is als Hij Zelf is, om Zijn volk uit hun smart te verlossen. En David is daar zóó zeker van, dat hij spreekt van den God mijner goedertierenheid! Hij is zeker van zijn aandeel in dien goedertieren God. David grijpt zelfs vooruit: God zal mij doen zien op mijn verspieders. De huilende bende rodom zijn huis met Saul aan hun hoofd zal David als een prooi ontvangen in den dag der dagen.

En tot zoo lang?

Nog twee zaken.

Over het eerste sprekende zullen we niet in bijzonderheden treden. Genoeg om de lijn in 't algemeen te trekken. Die eerste zaak is dit: David begint tegen Gods vijanden te bidden. Hij vraagt om verschrikkelijke oordeelen. Strijdt dit tegen de woorden van Jezus? Hebt Uwe vijanden lief? Neen, lezer. Jezus had het over *onze* vijanden. David heeft het over *Gods* vijanden. Daar ligt het verschil. Let maar op de conclusie van zijn vloek-gebed. "Laat ze weten dat God heerscher is in Jacob, ja tot aan de einden der aarde!" Het gaat om God. Om Gods wil moeten ze niet spoedig sterven, doch ellendiglijk onzwerfen. Het volk Israel's moet God's daden kunnen merken. God moet geëerd, zelfs in de smart der goddeloozen.

De tweede zaak is het einde van David's smarten. Hij eindigt met te zingen. Zelfs vooraleer hij door het venster naar beneden gelaten werd door zijn vrouw. Leest de laatste twee verzen. Het is David's ervaring van den hemel op aarde.

Zóó heeft Jezus ook gezongen, doch later, veel later, na Zijn smarten. Tusschen het zuchten van Jezus en den zang van Jozef's hof ligt de eeuwigheid der eeuwigheden van ontzettende Godsverlating. Bij Hem hooren we het angstige "Waarom"!

Maar juist omdat Zijn smart onvergelykelijk zwaarder was, is Zijn lied het lieflijkste wat hemel en aarde ooit hoorde. Daar zwijgen de Engelen Gods. Want hun Jezus zingt van den God Zijner goedertierenheid. Kunt gij allen U voorstellen hoe God verlangde om Jezus op te halen uit den kuil?

O onze God! wanneer zullen wij dat lied van het Lam meezingen?

G. V.

The Lord will bless and prosper those,
Yea, blest indeed are they,
Whose ways are just, who constantly
His righteous law obey.

The Right of the Innocent Divorced Party to Remarry

My subject presupposes that this particular divorced party is innocent. The extent or degree of his (or her) innocence need not be discussed. Neither does this article purpose to answer the question whether one may seek and obtain a divorce. Some, we know, are of the opinion that a divorce is never permissible. They believe that what God hath joined together man may not and cannot put asunder. Death only can make separation. Only then, when God Himself breaks the bond, is remarriage permissible. Of course, this also applies to the "Innocent Divorced Party". He (or she) may certainly remarry when the other party dies.

This need not deter us, however, from expressing our opinion on the question mentioned above. We do not believe that a divorce is never permissible. Rom. 7:2 and I Cor. 7:10 are not applicable here and cannot be quoted to sustain the contention that a divorce is never permissible. For, although these passages do teach that the woman is bound to her husband as long as the husband liveth, do they also teach that this is true in the event of fornication? Fornication is not discussed in either Rom. 7:2 or I Cor. 7:10. The passages in Scripture which do throw light on the question whether an innocent divorced party may remarry are Matt. 5:32 and 19:9. These passages, in distinction from Mark 10:11,12 and Luke 16:18, throw light exactly on this question because they speak by implication of the "Innocent Divorced Party", the party divorced saving for the cause of fornication. Although it is true that man may not put asunder what God hath joined together, he nevertheless can and does put asunder. The words of Jesus in Matt. 5:32, "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication," surely imply that it is permissible to put away one's wife in the event of fornication (and this means that a man legally divorces his wife). This, of course, does not necessarily mean that as soon as fornication occurs the other must seek a divorce, the spirit of Christian love must seek to overcome (and can overcome) and pardon also this sin. Yet, so Jesus implies, the sin of fornication, can be a cause for divorce. However, our subject forbids us to enter into this phase of the problem. We are at present concerned only with the "Innocent Divorced Party" and his (or her) right to remarry.

In Matt. 5:32 we read: "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced com-

mitteth adultery".

And in Matt. 19:9 we read: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery".

In Matt. 15:32 we read of two parties who commit adultery and of one who is the cause for another committing adultery. The first man, who put away his wife except for fornication, causeth his wife to commit adultery. The second man, who marrieth her that is put away, committeth adultery. And this, of course, implies that the woman, who, when put away remarries, also is guilty of adultery.

In Matt. 19:9, on the other hand, Christ speaks of three parties who are guilty of adultery. The first man who, having put away his wife except for fornication, marrieth another, and the second man who marrieth her which is put away are guilty of this sin. And the third party guilty of adultery is, of course, the woman who, having been divorced except for fornication, remarries.

At one of the Christian Reformed synods, when this question was being treated, these passages of the Saviour were explained in such a way that all three parties, of whom Jesus declares that they commit adultery if they marry again, can marry without rendering themselves guilty of the sin of adultery.

Their reasoning was as follows. Firstly, the first man puts away his wife but is therefore not as yet guilty of adultery. If now he should immediately marry another he would be guilty of adultery. But, the reasoning continues, another possibility presents itself. He waits until his divorced wife marries another. This remarriage of the wife would free the man and permit him to marry again, inasmuch as his wife would free the man and permit him to marry again, inasmuch as his wife married another and thereby committed adultery. Secondly, the second man, should he marry the divorced wife immediately upon her being divorced by her first husband without waiting for him to marry another, becomes guilty of adultery inasmuch as the woman was as yet legally bound to her first husband. But if now the second man also should wait until the first man again marries, he is at liberty to marry the divorced party without committing the sin of adultery. This conclusion is based upon a translation of the text which would read: "And whoso marrieth her when she is put away", which translation is understood in the sense: immediately after she is put away and before the first man had married another woman. It is claimed that that part of the text which reads, "And whoso marrieth her which is put away", permits this translation. Thirdly, this also renders it possible for the divorced wife to marry again without committing adultery.

She has been divorced by her husband. If now she should marry again before her husband remarries she becomes guilty of adultery. But has her husband married another, she is free to marry again and is not guilty of the sin of adultery.

Is it not strange, when viewing these interpretations of the words of the Saviour, that an explanation of the text should lead to a conclusion which very evidently teaches the very opposite of what Christ intended to teach us? Let us then look at these interpretations a little more closely.

The assertion that that first man is at liberty to marry another is surely in conflict with the clear explanation of the text. We do not read anywhere in the text that he commits adultery when he marries immediately, hence before his wife marries another. We do read: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for fornication, causeth her to commit adultery". It does not make a particle of difference when or under which circumstances he should marry another, he commits adultery. Yea, he not only commits adultery, but, according to the text in Matt. 5, he also causes his wife to commit adultery. He is guilty of a double sin. He himself commits adultery. And he is also the cause of the sin of adultery as committed by his wife if she should marry another. Is it not a rather strange reasoning, whereby the man, who causes his wife to commit this sin, now in turn becomes innocent of this sin when she marries another? The man causes his wife to sin and that sin of his wife renders him innocent! Hence, we may safely conclude that the man who divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another is guilty of adultery. Never may such a marriage be condoned or recognized by the church. The second and third instances belong together, inasmuch as the second man marries the wife who had been divorced.

The question is simply this: May a divorced woman, put away by her husband saving for fornication, marry again? Or, one can ask the question more significantly: Is she not at liberty to marry another if the man, who put her away, marries another? The above interpretation of the words of Christ, given at a synod of the Christian Reformed Churches, answers this question in the affirmative.

We must remember that the above erroneous conclusion was based upon the assumption that that part of the text, translated, "And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced", can be translated so as to read: And whosoever shall marry her when she is divorced. Of course, even if this translation were possible, it would still not be identical with the reading: Immediately upon being divorced. And one can surely not read into the text: If the first man have not remarried. In his connection it is well to bear in mind that it was a law among the Jews that a man, who

had put away his wife on unbiblical grounds, might remarry immediately but that the divorced woman must await at least three months. Consequently, it was impossible to marry this woman immediately upon her divorce, for the simple reason that she was compelled by Jewish law to wait at least three months. The interpretation of the text, that only then adultery was committed when a man married this divorced woman immediately without waiting for her first husband to marry again, is therefore impossible. However, it is very doubtful whether one may read the above translation into the text: And whosoever shall marry her when she is divorced. Literally we read here: "And whosoever, if (or, in case) he should marry the one having been divorced, committeth adultery." The natural explanation of the text is: If anyone puts away his wife and marries another, and another man then marries the divorced party, this second man commits adultery and also the woman is guilty of adultery. And, finally, this erroneous explanation proceeds from the assumption that fornication and adultery have the same meaning in the text. If the first man marries another, thus is the reasoning, he commits fornication and fornication is adultery and adultery is a legal basis for divorce and remarriage with another. And the divorced wife is then free to re-marry if the first man has married another woman. Does this interpretation not reason that when the first man marries another he commits adultery? Does this act of the first man not liberate his wife and permit her to marry another? Or, does this act of the first man not permit his wife to ask for a divorce? Is not fornication (according to the text) the Scriptural ground for divorce? We read, do we not: That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for fornication, committeth adultery? Fornication, is therefore a ground for divorce. Hence, fornication and adultery are regarded as identical in meaning. But, this is evidently not the true interpretation of the text. The text distinguishes between fornication and adultery. Fornication refers to a living of sexual fellowship of one of the married parties with a stranger. Adultery refers to the breaking of the marriage bond. Not adultery but fornication is given in the text as a possible basis for separation or divorce.

Hence, we conclude that, if there be no fornication, a man and his wife must be regarded as united, commit adultery when the one puts away the other. This means that he having put away his wife commits adultery, and she having been put away also commits adultery, if she marry another. Hence, if the woman who has been put away be innocent, having been divorced by her husband except for fornication, she may never marry again. If she marry again, she commits adultery. His adultery does not render her free. Even so, however, the question may arise: But if

the man divorces his wife except for fornication and marries another, does he then not commit the sin of fornication? Does he then not live the life of matrimony with a woman with whom he is not legally married, according to Scripture? Scripture regards his first marriage as binding. Yet he lives the life of matrimony with another. To this we answer that the words of Christ presuppose exactly this state of affairs, for we read of a man who, having divorced his wife illegally, marries another. Nevertheless, Christ continues: And whosoever shall marry the one who has been divorced committeth adultery. This implies, does it no, that also the one divorced committeth adultery. Hence, the "Innocent Divorced Party", we conclude, may not marry again, as long as her legal husband (or legal wife) liveth.

H. V.

The Conscientious Objector

The expression "Conscientious Objector" hardly needs a definition. Most everyone is well aware of what it implies. Especially is this true in these days of war in which many are placed before the questions: What is right? and, What is wrong? What must I do? and, How shall I do it?

Though the term could be applied in a general way to all who object to certain things or acts for conscience sake, it is more particularly used in times of warfare such as the nation and the world is now conducting. One reads and hears often now-a-days of the conscientious objector.

However, no matter whether we speak of it in a general sense or particularly, the fact must be established that in either case we have to deal with the important subject of christian liberty. And if we understand the conception 'Christian Liberty' correctly, it is a liberty which is circumscribed by the law of Christ. In other words, there can be no christian freedom other than that which is ordered and controlled by the law of Christ Jesus our Lord. All liberty which is not governed by this law will be revolution and anarchy in a most literal sense; a liberty also in which the conscience is activated by the law of sin. This pseudo liberty we witness in the period of the French revolution which was instigated by a man like Rousseau who advocated the liberty in which all the decency and order prescribed by the Word of God were barriers of restraint, and a liberty in which individualism could come to its own. This pagan freedom, though it gives free reign to the lusts and passions of sinful men, is a freedom without restraint, and such freedom is revolting. On the other hand, true

peace and happiness, true freedom, are to be found in the sphere where the Word and Law of God in Christ orders and controls. So the psalmist declares: "I will walk at liberty for I seek Thy precepts," and again, "Great peace have they which love Thy law".

Moreover, though christian liberty is subjected to the law of Christ in the Scriptures, it is nevertheless under no obligation respecting external things which in themselves are indifferent, things which we may indifferently sometimes use, and at other times omit them. It is necessary that we have a ready knowledge of this aspect of christian liberty, lest we fall into endless superstitions and lose all tranquillity of conscience. Some in the Church of Paul's day had evidently fallen into the error that it was wrong to eat meat and therefore ate herbs, while others believed that they might eat all things. One man esteemed one day above another, while another esteemed every day alike. To each of these classes the apostle exhorts: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." And further he states: "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." And further: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And finally: "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin".

We learn from this brief discussion on christian liberty therefore in the first place that all christian liberty must be controlled by law, the law of God in Christ. As a bird in the air and the fish in the water are free so long as they abide in the law of God in the air and the water, so the christian is free so long as he abides in the law of Christ. And secondly, that that law, as such, has no respect unto things in themselves indifferent. Sin is not in things. Though the law prescribes our conduct in the use of things, it does not have respect to the things themselves. And therefore, finally, we conclude that to him who thinketh that it is sinful to do a certain thing which in itself is not sinful, to him it is sin, for he sins against his conscience. Or to paraphrase the words of the apostle: 'It is not sinful to eat meat, but if you think it evil to do so, and you nevertheless do eat meat, you have violated your christian liberty, and you are damned if you eat'.

Now what does this have to do with the conscien-

tious objector? To answer this question, we must bear in mind that we conceive of such an objector as one who purports himself to be a christian, standing in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. He has therefore been delivered from the law of sin and death, and walks now in principle according to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. His mind and heart have been renewed, and therefore he also has a renewed conscience which allows or disallows, which condones or condemns, which says go ahead or stop, but always according to the will of God revealed in Christ in the Scriptures. Walking in the light, he necessarily will be a conscientious objector to all that opposes that light. He will, for example, when he hears God's name blasphemed, raise his voice in protest, and refuse the companionship of those who violate this commandment of God. He will, when the temptation arises, as it did with Joseph, to commit fornication and adultery, refuse and exclaim, 'how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' Having been delivered from the curse of the law, he has a delight in the law of God after the inward man. He is a conscientious objector to all that opposes that new principle of life. His christian liberty consists herein that he knows that he has been delivered from the bondage of sin and death by the perfect obedience of Jesus Who now calls him to walk in all good works according to the law of love. He is free therefore to serve his God once more antithetically by saying 'yes' to God and 'no' to darkness, the devil, and the lie. Every christian in this sense is truly a conscientious objector.

But then, it must be equally plain that the christian objects to nothing that does not militate against the principles of christian liberty, and certainly, he will take care that he objects not to any of the ordinances of God, even though these may seem to conflict with his feelings. He will have to judge all things in the light of the law of Christ and conform to that which is right according to that law.

This applies also to the question of participating in the present war now raging. One's conscience may tell him that it is evil to murder. In this case the conscience is true and responds truly in accord with the law of liberty. But if one's conscience should say that all killing is murder, therefore I may not take part in the death of a murderer, that conscience is not true, for it conflicts with the law which commands that all evil must be punished and he who sheds man's blood, his blood must be shed. If one therefore should conclude that he may never kill because all killing is murder, he would forever make it impossible to realize the ordinance of God to kill murderers. It must be plain that his conscientious objection is resting on false premises and not on the law to which he is subjected in the sphere of christian liberty. Add to this the

fact that the Scriptures plainly state that God has appointed governments to wield the sword in the civil state within its own borders and with respect to its own citizens, or against other governments as in the case of war. And God has also commanded the citizens under that government to obey unconditionally the sword power over them in all things that pertain to the domain of that government. One may not conscientiously object to participation in warfare when the law over him demands complete submission to the order of his government. His conscience, should he nevertheless object, is not true, because it conflicts with the law of God. The christian is not morally responsible for the justness or unrighteousness of a war declared by his government. Neither is he responsible for any act performed in strict obedience to the government as in the case of military service. But the christian is morally responsible to obey the law of God which demands obedience to the call of his government to fight. Should the christian doubt the justness of the war his government wages, he can have no conscientious objection to fighting in obedience to his government, but he may lodge a well-grounded protest with his government stating why he deems the war unjust. Yet though it is his privilege to judge the righteousness or unrighteousness of the war, a thing most difficult for one not acquainted with all the facts and purposes of his government, it is not his privilege to disobey the call to arms. For God will have every soul in subjection unto the higher powers who bear the sword in the name of God. The law of christian liberty binds the christian also to this law of God.

The same applies to the matter of Sunday labor in defense industries. One may be convinced that all labor on the Sabbath is a violation of the fourth commandment. Jesus Himself taught us that works of necessity not only may but must be performed on the Sabbath. Add to this the fact that should the government demand such Sunday labor in a national emergency, the christian citizen again is duty bound to obey his government. In either case the christian may have no objection which violates the law of God in the Scriptures. His conscience, should it object, militates against the ordinance of God and may not be relied upon.

However, in connection with this matter of Sunday labor, we have something to add. It is our conviction that much of this Sunday labor for defense is not by order of the government at all. Industrialists and manufacturers of defense goods have taken it upon themselves to order a seven day week, at least many of them have. Though the powers that be have hinted that war emergency would eventually demand a seven day week, it has not yet become evident to us that the law has been clamped down on every war plant. This, of course, makes it difficult for the christian to decide

whether the order to work on Sunday is government ordained or an order issued by selfish, covetous industrialists motivated by lucrative principles. Because of this, we have advised christian labor men who questioned the matter of Sunday labor and were not sure that the order came from the government, to make it a matter of conscience. In other words, should the christian doubt the authenticity of his orders to work on the Sabbath, and he felt that he did wrong by working, he may not sin against his conscience. And it is our opinion that in every case where no immediate emergency exists and the government does not demand it, the christian must be a conscientious objector to Sunday labor. And as to choosing jobs in which so-called works of necessity must be performed, such as policemen, firemen, switch-board operators, trainmen, etc., the conscientious objector to Sunday labor does right in leaving them well enough alone or rather leaving them to be performed by those who have no religious scruples concerning the Sabbath.

M. S.

The Shaking Of All Things

Some Preliminary Observations

That all things are indeed shaken in the events transpiring before our very eyes there can be little doubt. That the times in which we live are stark reality is a truth which also those, outside of the believers in Christ and His Word, must admit.

The attentive student of current events, while not reckoning with the "sure Word of prophecy, nevertheless asks where are we, and whither are we bound. He also recognizes that history is more than the mere enumeration of facts and happenings. He sees a definite continuity everywhere. And so he attempts apart from the revelation of God, to construct a view of the world and of life which is compatible with the facts as experienced. But, alas! the vision of the entire pattern, and the God-given meaning must always seem foolishness to him. Also today, the unbelieving student of history is a "blind man leading the blind" with the inevitable consequence of all the misery and disillusionment that it entails.

But to the believing student of scripture there is no disillusionment, for in "God's light he beholds the light". To be sure, all the details of history are not revealed to us in the "more sure prophetic Word", but the broad outlines of the pattern of history as decreed by the Chief-Architect, the Alpha and Omega of all things, are known to us in the "darkened glass".

All the data of scripture relevant to this subject cannot be discussed within the space allotted to us.

We will attempt, however, by citing some representative passages to sketch the Scriptural pattern of all things, and thus designate the place which the "shaking of all things" occupies herein.

Definition of the "Terms"

The Bible in many places speaks of "all things". Sometimes it employs this very term, and then again it speaks of that for which this term stands. Thus in Gen. 1:1 we read of "heaven and earth". This is significant, for it points to the scope of God's redemptive work in His Son. (Certainly also Genesis 1 is "dated" Christologically). This appears especially beautifully in Col. 1:16 where we read: "for in Him were *all things* created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; *all things* have been created through Him and unto Him." The same is taught in the "Prologue" of the Gospel of John. And in Ephesians 1:10 we have that illuminating passage on the Divine plan and purpose with "all things".

It is also quite clear from the Word of God, "all things" are a Cosmos, a Universe, a well arranged whole. And also this is an aspect of God's appraising eye, when He saw that all things were very good. Gen. 1:31. For this is not only evident from the narrative of Gen. 1 telling of the order of creation in the successive days, but is also clear from Eph. 3:15 which speaks of the "family" the "fatherhood" in heaven and on earth, which passage evidently has reference to the place of each creature in the whole of things, by virtue of its increated nature. This is verified, as far as the angel world is concerned, in Jude 6, where the writer speaks of the "own habitation" which the wicked angels have left. The Archangel Michael understands his "habitation" and "durst not bring a railing judgment" against Satan. On the other hand, in Psalm 8 we are taught that God also has determined the bounds of man's habitation, and of his future elevation. From this can be seen what Scripture intends to have us understand with the "term" "all things".

When Scripture speaks of the "shaking up" of all things it has reference to the breaking up of the established order of creation, as it has come to a certain development. The idea of "shaking up" presupposes that there is a well founded world-course. And that God as the "Almighty" violently shakes the established order of this present creation to a chaotic mass. Only He who upholds all things by the Word of His power, causing all things to consist in the Logos (Col. 1:17) can really shake the universe.

And this shaking is not along the lines of created ordinances, but is a Catastrophic-Shaking-Up. It is in a sense the breaking thru of the Wonder of God's

grace, because it precedes the last miracle, the regeneration, the renewal of all things.

That all things are "shaken up" also implies that nothing is to be annihilated. Scripture teaches neither the eternal continuance of the present order of things, nor their annihilation. The former was taught by the Grecians philosophers, the latter by anabaptists of every shade and color. Just as the sinful elect is not first erased out of existence, and then created a new creature, but the sinful creature is justified, sanctified, glorified, so also God will bring a glorified world out of the chaotic ruins of the world "shaken up". This is suggested in such passages as Rom. 8:11 and Phil. 3:21 which speaks of the positive, reconstructive side of all things as represented in man's glorified body.

Some Representative Texts

The first passage of Scripture, a passage which because of its historic setting, and New Testament interpretation, we consider most representative, is Haggai 2:6, 7. We quote: "For thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: yet once more, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the precious things of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of Hosts".

A few remarks of an exegetical nature are here in order.

First of all, we call attention to the fact, that the prophet Haggai here speaks of the shaking of "all things". He expressly enumerates them. He speaks of "the heavens, the earth, the sea and the dry land". The "sea" and "dry land" are evidently a further illucidation of "earth". It is also clear that this must be understood in the most literal sense.

That the text distinguishes between a *twofold shaking* of the earth. The Lord says that He will shake all things "yet once". This presupposes that He had shaken the earth before. When we turn to the context we find suggested the shaking of the earth, at the voice of God "speaking" at Sinai. This is what the Lord has reference to when we read: "according to the Word that I covenanted when you came out of Egypt and my Spirit abode among you". This shaking at Sinai must not, according to Holy Writ, be ascribed to some natural phenomena (as if anything ever occurs in this world in this deistic sense) but to the breaking forth of the holiness and righteousness of God who is a Consuming Fire! So terrible was the sight that Moses said: "I exceedingly fear and tremble". It was the herald, the trumpet-sound of the pouring out of the vials of God's wrath upon all who would not acknowledge Him that dwelleth between the Cherubim.

That was the first shaking. Thus the Spirit of

Truth interprets His own Word as recorded in Hebrews 12:26. For there Sinai is expressly mentioned and contrasted with Jerusalem unto which the New Testament church has come, because of the "blood that speaketh better things than Abel".

The second "shaking" the "once more" of which Haggai speaks is also explained by the writer of the Hebrews in the above mentioned passage. It then has reference to the Catastrophic Shake-up of the Universe of which we are told in II Peter 3:11-13. Peter here speaks of the "heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and elements melting with fervant heat". It is the same event referred to in Rev. 6:12-17 where with the Lamb's breaking of the "sixth seal" the sun, moon and stars fall to the earth, and the physical universe is "shaken up".

That this is the case further appears from the fact, that Haggai speaks of it as lying in the future. Haggai, a contemporary prophet of Zechariah, prophesied after the babylonian captivity. It will be a "little while", when this shaking will take place. The time element must here be reckoned according to the "speed" of God, and not according to our human experience and evaluation. Haggai also presents this "second shaking" as introducing a new and here-to-fore unknown glory of the "temple". And the Temple is symbolic of God dwelling with His people as the God of infinite perfection, in the beauty of holiness. It will be a house of greater dimension, as spoken of in the visions of Ezekiel 40-48, and as realized in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. Then there will be no more weeping at the sight of a "miserable hut", but the true joy of the feast of tabernacles. Zerubbabel and Joshua, the Royal-Priesthood of God can take heart, for Jehovah of Hosts, the Lord who rises to the battle (Numbers 10:35 and Psalm 68:1) will bring this about in the "shaking of all things". For it will mean that the heirs of the kingdom will receive the heritage which shall not be shaken. Hebr. 12:27.

There is according to Scripture a definite reason for the greater shaking of all things, above the shaking having taken place at Sinai. This is suggested by context in Hebrews 12. This is what we would call the historical-revelational motive. We now live in the dispensation of the Spirit. God "has spoken to us in these last days through His Son" that is the keynote in the whole epistle to the Hebrews. Greater and higher revelation also means greater flashing forth of the lightning, voices, thunderings and earthquakes from the throne of God's Majesty. In the dispensation of the Spirit the great day of the Lord assumes greater potentiality and actuality. Shall God be justified in judgment, then the catastrophic shaking must wait till "Last time". The waiting of the judgment day is not grace, but is the culmination of the wrath of God for the wicked.

Some Conclusions From the Foregoing

In the light of the foregoing we can make the following observations: (1) In view of the wicked whether they be viewed under the aspect of their individual life, or national constituency, the shake-up of the universe, their God-ordained home it is the rendering desolate of their home. This judgment begins at the house of God, where the light of God's revelation shown most brightly. See I Peter 4:17. The order of judgment is also note-worthy in Rev. 11:1-3 where the temple of God is measured. For these also the shaking up in wars and great conflicts and crises in history is the Divine "laughter" of Psalm 2, having the nations in derision. In spite of their endeavors their sword is always against themselves. This was typically the case with the Midianites whom Gideon and his band slew (Judges 7:22) and of the Host who marched against Jerusalem in the days of Jehoshaphat. (II Cron. 20:22, 23). And this shaking of the nations now often is the destruction of nations by their own swords.

A remark of a practical nature may be inserted at this time. Should not the present conflict of nations in its broad scope be viewed as the trumpet sound of the final shaking of all things? The "issue" in this war is still the "glorification" of the temple of God. All things must work together to that end. Let us not be deceived, lest we forfeit our crown.

(2) Theologically it must be said, that the great issue at stake is the "theodicy". God must be justified. This is the prayer and hope of the "saints under the altar" of the Zerrubabel-Joshua, King-Priestly people of God in the World. It is the content of the testimony of the "Two Witnesses" of God in "Sackcloth during this entire dispensations". (Rev. 11)

That this is the case, the wicked in the vision of Rev. 6:12-17 recognize. The great and powerful in the earth, must give praise to the "God of heaven". They see that it is the great day of the wrath of God, and that none can stand!

(3) And finally, it is the execution of the decrees of God which stand fast forever and ever in the way of His unsearchable judgments. O, the depth of the riches of His understanding and wisdom! For out of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things!

G. L.

Contribution

Esteemed Editor:

At the last meeting of the R. F. P. A. the Board decided to inform the writer of "News from our Churches" to write a little more news about our Churches.

Now as I have said and written before: If I do not receive news, then I can't write it, and therefore I would ask the different Consistories of our Churches in and around about Grand Rapids: please send in the news, so I can place it. It is much easier for me; and some of the readers like it better.

There were a goodly number who took my last article in the Standard Bearer wrong. It seems there is a misunderstanding. As you know, in the article, I wrote on Defense and the Christian. Some were of the opinion that it was my contention that a Christian might not work on Sunday in a Defense factory.

Now to remove that misunderstanding I will write in the English what I meant to explain in the Holland.

It is my conviction that a civilian not only may, but he is duty bound to work on Sunday; strict defense work in a defense factory.

We must never forget, times are abnormal. We are in the midst of a terrible war, and soon it will take thousands of our own boys. They must fight regardless. Also on Sunday. You may say, they are drafted, and as long as the Government does not draft us, don't work on Sunday. Now, let the boys do it (hey), and die with a broomstick in the hand instead of a gun. Have we forgotten those incidents of months gone by?

We must not say either, as some do, the Government don't need it all, for there is a shortage of many things.

Now, as I see it, then, it is no sin for a christian to work on Sunday, defense work in a defense factory, and he must not wait until the Government drafts him, for a civilian in time of war becomes a soldier while he works in a defense factory, and the Government is responsible for it and not we.

If I am wrong, (and according to some I am) let us have a friendly discussion in our Standard Bearer. Then we get some more light on the subject.

S. D. V.

Ye children of God's covenant,
Who of His grace have heard,
Foregt not all His wondrous deeds
And judgments of His word.

O Lord, remember me in grace,
Let me salvation see;
The grace Thou showest to Thy saints,
That grace reveal to me.